

TITLE ____—ADDITIONAL GENERAL PROVISIONS

SEC. ____ None of the funds made available in this Act may be used to issue any permit for, or otherwise approve or allow, importation of any polar bear or polar bear part under section 104(c)(5)(A) of the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972 (16 U.S.C. 1374(c)(5)(A)).

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to the order of the House of Tuesday, June 26, 2007, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. INSLEE) and the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. TIAHRT) each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Washington.

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Chairman, behold the polar bear *Ursus maritimus*, one of the most magnificent creatures on earth, legendary in its strength and to date its survival.

But today its survival is at great risk. It deserves the protection of the Marine Mammal Protection Act, and it does not have it.

Today we seek to close the loophole that alone amongst marine mammals allows the importation of bear heads, bearskins, bear claws in opposition to the basic concept of the Marine Mammal Protection Act. And we do so because this animal certainly is at risk. It is at risk because where there is no ice, there are no polar bears. This creature is dependent on the ice, and the ice is disappearing. That is what has led the Bush administration's Secretary of Interior to propose to list it as a threatened species.

But it gets worse. If you look at what the future is going to bring this bear, by 2040 the recent studies indicate that there will be no meaningful sea ice in the Arctic ocean by 2040 upon which these bears depend for their survival.

Now, we have folks who do enjoy trophy hunting in the United States, and there is nothing wrong with hunting or any suggestion of that in this amendment. But the truth is this: At this moment of risk to these bears, polar bear cubs need their parents in their dens more than we need polar bearskins in our dens. And this will simply close that loophole to remove that lack of protection from these animals.

Now, these animals are not threatened just in the United States. The ongoing trophy hunt is going on in Canada, where the International Polar Bear Community has found that at least half of the specific populations of polar bears are at great risk for extinction. And we know that hunters can be a force for conservation. We know they help provide habitat for ducks with Ducks Unlimited.

But the fact of the matter is, is that with a bullet to a bear, you cannot conserve it. And the fact of the matter is that the \$750 permits that go to this bear hunt cannot solve the problem of global warming. And we stand here today to say that we ought to have the same level of American national commitment to the polar bears' continued survival as we have had for the bald eagle. And if we demonstrate that com-

mitment, our grandchildren will enjoy these polar bears. And if we do not, they will not.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to yield 1 minute to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. LOBIONDO).

Mr. LOBIONDO. Mr. Chairman, I rise in strong support of the Inslee amendment.

This amendment would restore a ban on taking polar bear parts and importing them into the United States, a ban that was in place for 22 years. As Mr. INSLEE indicated, it was right around the end of last year when the Secretary of Interior and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service surprised many of us by proposing to list the polar bears as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. They have now taken public comments and must issue a final decision by December, 2008. At the very least, stemming the tide of polar bear imports, imports, I stress, until this decision is made makes sense.

Those who oppose the amendment would like to use the argument that this is all about restricting the right to hunt. It is not. If it were, I would not be standing here in support of it. I remember fondly, with my dad, my cousins, my uncles, hunting as a young man, and I don't believe this restricts the right of hunting.

So I would ask my colleagues to think seriously about the importance of this amendment and to give it their utmost consideration and strong support.

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Chairman, I yield to the gentleman from Utah (Mr. BISHOP) for a brief question.

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. Mr. Chairman, the simple question I have is the picture of the polar bear that is down there, that is not, by any chance, new, is it?

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Chairman, this is an old polar bear species that has been around here for centuries, and the ice is melting under its feet.

Mr. Chairman, I yield 30 seconds to the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. WHITFIELD).

Mr. WHITFIELD. Mr. Chairman, I want to thank the gentleman for offering this amendment.

It is illegal to hunt polar bears in America today except for subsistence. You cannot do trophy hunting of polar bears today. So what happened is you have wealthy American hunters that go to Canada. They pay \$30,000 to kill a polar bear for one reason, and that reason is to cut its head off, send it back to America, and put it above their fireplace.

There are only 20,000 to 25,000 polar bears left in America. This amendment simply prohibits funds from being used to permit these wealthy hunters from sending polar bear parts back to the U.S.

We should protect polar bears. This amendment is the right approach to take.

Mr. TIAHRT. Mr. Chairman, I rise in opposition to this amendment.

Under the current law, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service permits, under very stringent rules, the importation of bear parts for trophies. But this is only allowed from an approved management area in Canada.

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Importation from other countries is prohibited because they are covered by the CITES, or Convention on International Trade and Endangered Species.

Also allowed under current law, other exemptions are permitted, but limited to Native American purposes, for medicines, for religious reasons and for certain scientific purposes. All of these require a permit from the Fish and Wildlife Service. And as far as the committee knows, the Fish and Wildlife Service is doing a very good job.

I also have a letter from the Canadian embassy. The Canadian Government is opposed to banning the polar bear trophy imports. Canada has strong opposition to this amendment, where two-thirds of the world's polar bear population exists. Now they're studying this through their endangered species group. We are studying this, as far as America is concerned, under our Endangered Species Act. And these two reviews are just about to be done. So this amendment is actually premature. And knowing that these two studies are pending, the Canadian Government has decided to oppose this. So I think this is premature. It should probably wait until next year, or they should just wait until the governments of the United States and Canada come to a conclusion.

Also, I want to note for the record that there are groups that are opposed to this amendment. These groups, besides the Canadian Government, include the U.S. Sportsmen's Alliance, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, the National Rifle Association, Boone & Crockett Club, Congressional Sportsmen Foundation, the Conservation Force, the North American Bear Foundation and the Wildlife Management Institute, among others.

So I think it is very important that we allow top scientists in both the United States Geological Survey and the Fish and Wildlife Service do their polar bear population studies and see what problems exist before we start to limit what's going on under the current situation. So I think it's premature.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. KING).

Mr. KING of Iowa. I thank the gentleman from Kansas for yielding.

I have listened to the opening of this debate, and I think sometimes we get a little bit confused about what it is about. But there is plenty of evidence out here and plenty of support out here that the polar bear population is not threatened. There is a healthy population of 25,000 worldwide, I think. And contrary to the gentleman's remarks